


WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2024

Brennan Legacy Awards 2024

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About the Brennan Center for Justice

The Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law is a nonpartisan law and policy institute that seeks to reform, revitalize, and defend our country's systems of democracy and justice so they work for all.

For over 25 years, we have built a distinct model for our work: part think tank, part advocacy group, part cutting-edge communications hub. We start with rigorous research. We craft innovative policies. And we fight for them — in Congress and the states, in the courts, and in the court of public opinion.

Today, we are in a great fight for the future of constitutional democracy in the United States. At this pivotal moment, the Brennan Center has stepped forward to play a singular national role in the long-term drive for a more perfect union.

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Learn more about defending free and fair elections.



Brennan Legacy Awards

Wednesday, May 1, 2024

Cipriani Wall Street

Welcome

Kimberley Harris, Brennan Center Board Co-Chair

The Fight for Democracy

Michael Waldman, President and CEO, Brennan Center

Award Presentation

Gina M. Raimondo, U.S. Secretary of Commerce

PRESENTED BY

Kimberley Harris

Award Presentation

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor (ret.), Supreme Court of Ohio

AND

Ohio Organizing Collaborative

ACCEPTED BY

Molly Shack, Executive Director

Prentiss Haney, Senior Advisor

Jeniece L. Brock, Policy & Advocacy Director

Samuel Gresham Jr., Board Member

PRESENTED BY

Melissa Murray, Brennan Center Board Member

Ending Gerrymandering in Ohio

DISCUSSION WITH

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor (ret.), **Molly Shack**, **Prentiss Haney**

MODERATED BY

Melissa Murray

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As of April 23, 2024



Gina M. Raimondo

From her leadership as the first woman governor of Rhode Island to her current international role, U. S. Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo has embodied the spirit of the Brennan Legacy Award by putting basic human dignity, fairness, and opportunity at the heart of government.

Secretary Raimondo grew up in Rhode Island in a tight-knit Italian-

American family. After working for 26 years in manufacturing, her father lost his job — and the family’s one paycheck — when his factory moved overseas. The secretary explained, “He lost his livelihood, his career, his confidence, and his pride.” This experience helped shape her core beliefs that a job is more than just a paycheck; it’s about dignity and community. It also spurred her mission to bring good-paying, skilled manufacturing jobs back to the U.S.

As Rhode Island’s governor from 2015 to 2021, she made record investments in infrastructure, education, and job training. She succeeded in turning around the state’s declining economy and put tens of thousands back to work.

That was not enough: “Our work is not done until we lift up those who are struggling the most,” she said. Indeed, she raised the state minimum wage, cut taxes for senior citizens, established guaranteed paid sick leave, created one of the first free community college programs in the nation, and installed full-day kindergarten.

Secretary Raimondo championed women in the workplace, in leadership roles, and in elected office. She embraced diversity, appointing more judges of color than any previous Rhode Island governor. For the first time, the state’s supreme court became majority women. And she was one of the first governors to sign automatic voter

“America’s diversity is a competitive advantage — but only if we give everyone an opportunity to fulfill their potential and fully participate.”

Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo

registration into law — a policy developed by the Brennan Center.

She brought her commitment to economic equity to the Commerce Department, which she has led since 2021. Among the programs she touts: implementing the \$50 billion CHIPS Act, delivering affordable and reliable internet to all, expanding workforce development and skills training programs, investing in regional tech hubs across the country, and promoting STEM education at minority-serving institutions.

And she has taken center stage in protecting the public from runaway artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

In October 2023, President Biden issued an executive order that, among other things, required safeguards and transparency measures for AI systems. “Gina Raimondo is the secret MVP of Biden’s sweeping new executive order,” announced a *Washington Post* headline.

Under the secretary’s charge: safety and security standards for AI companies and labeling of AI-generated content. As the secretary put it, “We need to put these standards and precautions in place right now so that as this innovation continues apace, people don’t get hurt.”



AWARD PRESENTER

Kimberley Harris

Kimberley Harris is executive vice president of Comcast Corporation and general counsel of NBCUniversal. She also serves as co-chair of the Brennan Center’s Board of Directors. Harris joined NBCUniversal in 2013 from Davis Polk & Wardwell, where she was a partner in the litigation department. Before Davis Polk, Harris served as

counsel in the U.S. Department of Justice and the White House. She became the principal deputy counsel and deputy assistant to President Barack Obama in 2011. Harris now serves on the board of directors for the Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. and Advocates for Children of New York. She is a member of the advisory board for the Yale Law School Center for the Study of Corporate Law and the board of trustees of the Mount Sinai Health System. She holds degrees from Harvard University and Yale Law School.

Fighting for Fair Maps in Ohio

Ohio voters will cast their ballots this year using skewed election maps imposed by politicians who repeatedly violated state law in their quest for power. Tonight, we honor leaders of the bipartisan effort to curb this abuse of power: retired Ohio Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor and the Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC).

In 2022, a broken redistricting system produced maps that — despite a closely divided public — locked in a veto-proof supermajority for state Republicans. OOC and partners quickly mobilized in opposition, with the Brennan Center as their legal counsel.

We persuaded the Ohio Supreme Court to strike down the plans. O'Connor, a registered Republican, joined with three justices who are registered Democrats to cast the deciding vote. This bipartisan majority would go on to reject seven map proposals in all.

But lawmakers refused to comply. Aided by right-wing activists, they asked federal courts to sidestep the state rulings and force the adoption of an unconstitutional map.

It was an egregious affront to equal representation — and a sign that a systemic fix was needed. Fortunately, the Ohio Constitution grants the people the right to bring constitutional amendments by ballot initiative.

Today, OOC and O'Connor are at the forefront of the Citizens Not Politicians campaign to put independent redistricting on the 2024 ballot.

The Brennan Center is proud to partner with them and to celebrate their work with this year's Legacy Award.

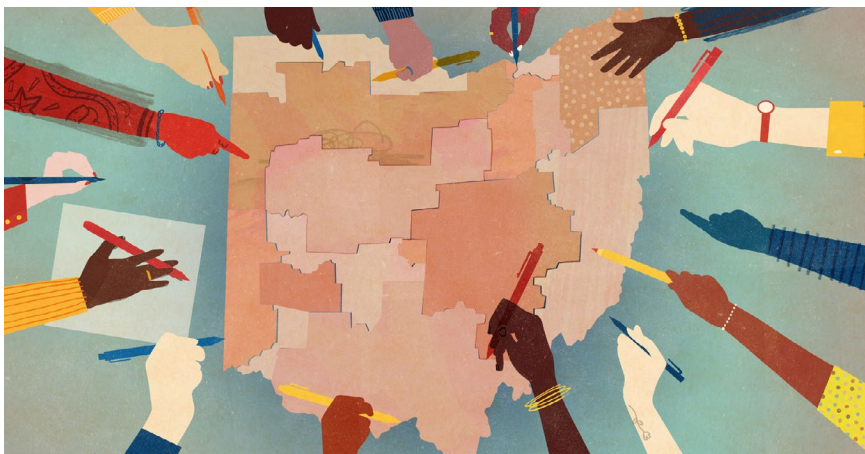


ILLUSTRATION: NICK OGONOSKY



Maureen O'Connor

Maureen O'Connor served as Ohio's first female Chief Justice from 2011 to 2022.

She was elected to the high court on four occasions by the citizens of Ohio, twice as Chief Justice. Upon retiring, she became the longest-serving statewide elected woman in Ohio history, having also been lieutenant governor and a county prosecutor.

A respected jurist for more than four decades, O'Connor is a steadfast champion of democracy. She is a member of the executive committee of the Citizens Not Politicians campaign for independent redistricting in Ohio. She is also a senior fellow of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation, working to advance the foundation's pro-democracy mission.

O'Connor has been similarly devoted to enhancing accessibility and fairness in the judicial system. She co-chaired the National Task Force on Fines, Fees, and Bail Practices and has vocally advocated to end excessive cash bail. She allocated \$40 million to improve court technology, making Ohio a leader in administering justice through the Covid-19 pandemic.

She is a past president of the Conference of Chief Justices and former chair of the National Center for State Courts. She is also one of six members of the Advisory Group of Experts to Ukraine vetting candidates for the Constitutional Court of Ukraine.

“If we get this amendment passed, it will be the most important thing I've done in my career.

Gerrymandering is at the heart of what's problematic in the governance of Ohio and the country.”

Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor

Ohio Organizing Collaborative (OOC)

OOC is a powerhouse in Ohio politics. It unites returning citizens, childcare providers, students, faith leaders, and parents to build transformative grassroots power in Ohio. OOC operates Ohio's largest voter registration program, with plans to register 180,000 voters in 2024. Learn more at ohorganizing.org.



Molly Shack

Molly Shack is OOC's executive director. She previously served as OOC's civic engagement director, helping build its voter registration program. Her decades-long organizing efforts have won significant progress on education, voting rights, community safety, and criminal justice. Shack was born and raised in Columbus and is a proud graduate of the Ohio public education system.

Her passion for organizing was instilled at a young age: her father was a stagehand and union leader, and her mother led legal outreach to low-income tenants, immigrants, and domestic abuse survivors.



Prentiss Haney

Prentiss Haney is a strategic advisor to OOC and previously served as its co-executive director. He is a veteran organizer and strategist who has trained thousands of community leaders and led grassroots campaigns across the state. Haney previously served as executive director of the Ohio Student Association. He also cofounded the Midwest Culture Lab. He is a 2018 graduate of the

Rockwood Leadership Institute and a 2019 Transforming Justice Fellow with the Ohio Transformation Fund. He earned his bachelor's degree in urban affairs from Wright State University.

OOC has helped secure remarkable progress for social, racial, and economic justice:

- Defeated the attempt to roll back direct democracy in Ohio.
- Won a fair fix to the state's broken school funding system.
- Passed sweeping police oversight and accountability in Cleveland.
- Protected collective bargaining rights for working Ohioans.



AWARD PRESENTER

Melissa Murray

Melissa Murray is a professor at NYU School of Law and faculty director of the Birnbaum Women's Leadership Center. She serves on the Brennan Center's Board of Directors. Murray is an award-winning expert in family law, constitutional law, and reproductive rights and justice. She is cohost of the hit legal podcast *Strict Scrutiny* and

coauthor of *The Trump Indictments: The Historic Charging Documents with Commentary* — a #1 *New York Times* bestseller. Murray has been published widely, including in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, and has offered commentary for numerous media outlets, including NPR, MSNBC, and CNN. Murray clerked for Sonia Sotomayor, then of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. She is a graduate of the University of Virginia and Yale Law School.

FEATURED SPEAKER



Michael Waldman

Michael Waldman is president and CEO of the Brennan Center, which he has led since 2005. He is a constitutional lawyer and expert on the presidency and American democracy. Waldman was director of speechwriting for President Bill Clinton. He was responsible for writing or editing nearly two thousand speeches, including four State of the Union and two inaugural addresses.

Waldman is the author of seven books, including *The Supermajority: How the Supreme Court Divided America*. *Kirkus Reviews* called it “a damning account of a Supreme Court gone wildly activist in shredding the Constitution.” Other books include *The Fight to Vote* and *The Second Amendment: A Biography*. He frequently appears on television and radio and writes for numerous national publications.

“We are in a great fight for the future of American democracy. Nothing less.”

Michael Waldman

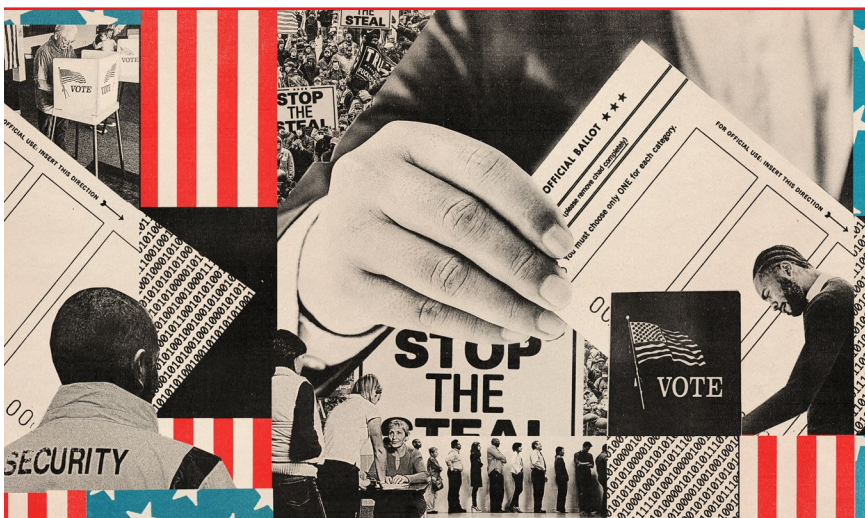


ILLUSTRATION: LINCOLN AGNEW

IN MEMORIAM



Remembering Patricia Bauman (1941–2024)

Patricia Bauman, a longtime leader and devoted champion of the Brennan Center, passed away on March 26, 2024. She was a mainstay of this event and co-chaired our board of directors for 12 years, first alongside Lawrence Pedowitz and more recently Bob Atkins.

Patricia played an instrumental role in shaping the vision for the Brennan Center. She encouraged us to expand our advocacy to cover census and redistricting issues that have grown increasingly critical in recent years. She cared passionately about ensuring free elections, curbing abuses of power, and making the criminal justice system fairer.

She supported this work through her position as president of the Bauman Foundation, which for years has backed initiatives to bolster civic participation, voter registration and outreach, and election protection. She was also a key leader for the Natural Resources Defense Council, Democracy Alliance, Catalist, and Montefiore Medical Center.

We will be forever grateful for Patricia’s guidance and generosity. We will remember her as a fierce, funny, devoted, tough, savvy, and loving leader for this organization. She was committed to justice and democracy — and had a vision for how a group like the Brennan Center could advance them. We will miss her dearly.

BRENNAN LEGACY AWARD PAST HONOREES

Since 2001, the Brennan Center has presented the Legacy Award to leaders and organizations for advancing critical democracy and justice initiatives.

2023

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JPMorgan Chase & Co.

2021

Kenneth I. Chenault
Kenneth C. Frazier
More Than a Vote
Darren Walker

2019

Katie Fahey
Desmond Meade
Levi Strauss & Co.
Patagonia

2018

Preet Bharara
Christine Todd Whitman
Salesforce

2017

Dan Schulman
Rev. Dr. William Joseph Barber II

2016

Sandra Phillips Rogers
Christopher Jackson

2015

Kimberley Harris

2014

Brad Smith
Zachary W. Carter

2013

Sheri McCoy
Bill Moyers
Bryan Stevenson

2012

Michael S. Solender
Judith S. Kaye

2011

Robert M. Morgenthau
Jane C. Sherburne

2010

Cory A. Booker
Indra C. Nooyi

2009

Eric H. Holder Jr.
Nicole Seligman

2008

Lewis B. Cullman
Representative Donna F. Edwards
Jay S. Fishman

2007

Representative John Conyers Jr.
Frederick A.O. Schwarz Jr.
Neal S. Wolin

2006

Richard Cotton
Representative John Lewis

2005

Bertha Lewis
Anna Deavere Smith
Daniel Vasella

2004

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2003

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Our work in 2023 depended on the support of legal leaders who fought alongside us for democracy, justice, and the rule of law. We are tremendously grateful for their commitment.

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We extend special thanks to Reed Smith LLP for its partnership in *Ohio Organizing Collaborative v. Ohio Redistricting Commission* to fight for fair legislative maps in the state of Ohio.

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The Brennan Center extends immense gratitude to Robert Atkins for his invaluable contributions during his nine-year tenure as co-chair of the board of directors, which ended in December 2023. The impact of Bob's wise leadership will be felt for decades ahead.

SPECIAL THANKS

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The Brennan Center extends special thanks to the following people for making this evening possible:

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